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"The Challenge and opportunities of the World Decade for Cultural Development"

on the occasion of the Non-Governmental Organizations' Seminar "The World Decade for Cultural Development. NGOs respond to the challenge", sponsored by the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development and co-sponsored by UNESCO and the United Nations Department of Public Information.

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Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

The World Decade for Cultural Development launched in 1988 is perhaps the most timely, yet least understood ten year venture undertaken by the international community. Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 41/189 in December 1986 under the joint auspices of the UN and UNESCO, the Decade has four main objectives: to take into acccunt the cultural dimension of development, to enrich and enhance cultural identities, to broaden participation in cultural life and to promote international cultural co-operation.

The lead stories in the news today are cultural questions; the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi allegedly by Tamil separatists; the resettlement of the Kurds in Dahok, the Ethiopian civil war and the Israeli airlift of Ethiopian Jews; the status of negotiations between the Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia and the challenges of the ethnic republics in the Soviet Union.

The Decade is misunderstood because it is devoted not only to focusing attention on the importance of artistic creativity and culture as a sector for development, it is mainly designed to take into account the cultural factors that affect development.

The Decade is timely. It comes at the end of the Cold War,

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itself a clash of beliefs and opposing ideologies of the two peripheral states who emerged as superpowers in the aftermath of World War II. Freed from fear of a global nuclear war, which was always unthinkable, but now barely plausible, the international community will increasingly focus attention on regional tensions and internal conflicts, most of which are rooted in ethnic particularlism. It would appear that neither communism, democracy, nor traditional monarchies have addressed satisfactorily the challenge of how to achieve adequate respect and representation for diverse cultural groups in the state and still maintain national integration.

It comes at a time when greater recognition is being accorded to the people as actors in the global system and vis-à-vis the state. The priority given to human rights, the popular uprisings that have brought about democratic governments in the Philippines, Haiti, Eastern Europe, Benin and more democratic processes in other parts of Africa and the call for development with a human face, or simply put by UNDP, human development, are evidence of the new reality in both the political and economic spheres.

It comes at a time when unprecendented advances in science and technology and the often excessive materialism in the post industrial states have stimulated questions about ethics and spiritual values as well as religious fundamentalism in both the north and the south.

It comes at a time when war, political repression and economic deprivation have created the largest movement of populations in history. There are over million refugess and displaced persons in the world. This massive relocation of persons from the south to the north is creating a crisis of pluralism in formerly relatively homeogeneous states. This phenomenon combined with the recent constitutional crisis in Canada and the ongoing debate in the United States on the need for a curriculum of inclusion are only two examples in this hemisphere of challenge of pluralism.

Many countries throughout the world will be affected by the revision of the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention of 1957 (N°107) by the ILO in June 1989. The revised Convention N°169 turns away from the principle outlined in Convention 107, that all programmes for indigenous people should have as the main objective their integration into the dominant culture and stresses instead the principle of respect for their culture and way of life. Special attention will be given to this question in the Western hemisphere during the Amerindia Congress as part of the commemoration in 1992 of what UNESCO calls the Encounter between two Worlds, and others refer to as Columbus's discovery of the Americas.

It is timely because the world recession has led to a reduction in resources for cultural events, considered by most governments to be a luxury during periods of economic austerity. The question of how to broaden participation in cultural life is

major issue in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe where state funding for artists, writers, filmmakers, musicians and dancers is drying up in the transition to a market economy, as well as on Broadway here in New York where the $40 theatre ticket is beyond reach of the lower middle class family. Indeed, this also is an important issue in the European Economic Community, which is studying ways to provide incentives to the private sector to increase its financial support for cultural activities.

Other issues related to ethics and artistic creativity in this country are hotly contested and important: colorization of old films, obscenity in art - whether a painting by Robert Mapplethrope, or a video tape by Madonna - versus first amendment rights guaranteeing the freedom of expression, electronic music and voice overs. In a case that could have wide implications, the United States has threatened to blacklist Indonesia for unfair trade practices because that country has restricted the import of American films on the grounds, according to the Indonesian Ambassador to the United States, that "a rapid invasion of foreign films and videos" could undermine the cultural identity and moral structure shaped by the customs and religious rites of village life.

On this 200th anniversary of the death of the genius Mozart, there is increasing talk in Europe of the emergence of "World Music" the particular spin other cultures place on essentially Anglo-American popular and rock music.

Concept of Culture

If there is some consensus that culture has become a salient issue in international affairs, there is less agreement about its definition. The word culture comes from the Latin words cultus referring to religious beliefs, or cultivare to work the land. Culture, the noun, developed into the meaning of cultivating the spirit (cultura animi philosophia est" - Cicero). In popular parlance culture has too often been linked with the concept of civilization. It is normally believed that the word "civilization" dates from the XVIIIth century. According to the French historian, Fernand Braudel, the word "civilization" first appeared in print in 1766. Civilization was considered to designate an ideal of intellectual, technical, moral and social progress, in short enlightenment.

Culture historically was linked to productivity. Singing accompanied agricultural work, and even the most rudimentary drinking cup had some creative adornment. The harvest, a rainfall, or victory in battle was feted with dances or a religious ceremony.

However, during the Renaissance i. the Western world, a burgeoning wealthy elite made the arts their private patronage. Soon afterwards, the period of the "enlightenment" gave rise to a number of separate and technical disciplines and placed Religion, Art, Philosophy into separate and distinct fields of

study. This remarkable period which set the stage for the extraordinary scientific and technological development that we enjoy today, also led to urbanization and industrialization and the separation of art and work.

The rise of the age of Western empires began with crusades against Islam and the mission civilisatrice with respect to other religions considered pagan actions which stimulated antipathy or indifference to other non-western cultures. People in the west did not learn nor do they adequately learn today that every intellectual and scientific discipline-philosophy, mathematics, chemistry, hydrology, medicine, astronomy, architecture, town planning-Europe used to modernize was drawn in an advanced form from the ancient civilizations in what we now call the third world.

Trafalgar Square in London demonstrates these diverse cultural antecedents admirably. The square's name is Arabic, as is the title of the name who won the 1805 battle. Admiral comes from the Arabic Amir al-Bahr. The compass Nelso used came from China and he took sightings from stars most of which to this day bear the Arabic names their discoverers gave them, and the flag signals he used in the battle came from India. The Geometry of Trafalgar Square was inherited from the Greeks and refined in Arab universities. The excellent drainage under the square derives from a technology drawn by Arab Baghdad from the ancient civilization of Harappa on the Indus River Plan, where before Christ they had town sanitation, public bathes and superb urban

organization. The water in the fountains is purified from chemistry processes which had been refined out of Asia by Arab chemists. In the nearby Banks people transact business with cheques without realizing that to is an Arabic word saq, and that they invented this form of exchange.

While Westerners viewed the ancient cultures and technologies of the third world during the colonial period as primitive, something more damaging happened to those cultures. As a result of the inferiority complex that was instilled in subjugated peoples during colonialism, they came to believe that they should not draw upon their own heritage, but must look to the West for progress.

It was not until the 19th century, in 1876, that the British anthropologist, E. B. Tylor, proposed a broad definition of culture and civilization that refers to that complex whole that encompasses the sciences, religions, arts, morality, laws, customs and all other perspectives and habits acquired by man as a member of society. This broader concept of culture confirmed the definition of that term adopted by the UNESCO World Congress on Cultural Development in Mexico in 1982 at which time Member States agreed that :

> "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, natural, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

This review of the evolution of the concept of culture and

historical and political context in which the Decade takes place should make clear that we have in mind a very broad definition of culture. As stated by the Director-General of UNESCO, "Culture is an intrinsic part of the life and awareness - consciousness and unconscious - of individuals and communities. It is a living fund of the creative activity, past and present, which has shaped over the centuries the system of values, traditions and tastes which defines the distinctive genius of a people".

UNESCO Action

UNESCO launched three major projects early in the Decade : an Integrated Study of the Silk Road : Routes of Dialogue, the revitalization of the Biblioteca Alexandria in Egypt and the Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Encounter between Two Worlds, or what others would call the Discovery of the Americas.

For centuries, caravans of merchants passed underneath the Western gate of the city of Xian, capital of China during the Tang dynasty, laden with silk and other luxury goods destined for the markets of Europe over 6,000km away. These hazardous journeys through the deserts, the Steppeland and mountainous passes of Central Asia or the sea route from Osaka, Japan to Venice, Italy served as a transmission belt of the spread of ideas, technologies, religious beliefs and the arts and

contributed to the cross-fertilization of civilizations. UNESCO's project is retracing these caravan routes and bringing together all of the studies of various aspects of this trade together. The Sultan of Oman put the Omani ship, the Fulk Al Salamah (Ship of Peace) at the disposal of the Organization for the maritime expedition. A series of projects will result from this major programme, which will take place over ten years, one of which will be An Historical Atlas of the Silk Roads.

Alexander the Great himself is credited with selecting the site of the present city of Alexandria, whose construction started in Egypte in 332 BC. The city grew rapidly under King Ptolemy I Soter, who extended royal patronage and protection to many scholars and artists. Reminiscent of the policies instituted by Alexander, King Ptolemy created a climate of tolerance and respect for different creeds and religions that was exceptionally favorable to cultural development. He laid the plans for the most remarkable public library of Antiquity, the Library of Alexandria that was completed by his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (308-246 BC). During Ptolemy II's reign, Alexandria became the world's leading commercial center. Greeks, Romans, Ethiopians and Jews came to transact their business among copyists, clerks, librarians, interpreters, ambassadors, court officials and public administrators. As a result of an extraordinary effort to collect all known works manuscripts were temporarily confiscated from ships moored in the harbor, copied and returned the Library of Alexandria became the world's first truly universal library. Although the exact number of the papyrus scrolls in the

collection is not known, estimates vary from 400,000 to 700,000. This library was destroyed by a fire when Julius Ceasar captured the port of Alexandria in 48 BC.

UNESCO has co-ordinated the architectural competition for the new Library and following its appeal to the international community to support this project has attracted over $65 million for this effort.

In 1992 will culminate a series of activities to commemorate the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the new world, thereby starting a period of Western penetration in the Western hemisphere. A series of events are being organized along with Member States and the Organization of American States that will restore the historic sites, prepare studies on the cultural interaction and assess the impact of the event which had negative as well as positive consequences.

Over the past two years our Decade Secretariat in UNESCO has provided over $1.1 million in small grants to 116 projects in 65 countries. Non governmental organizations have been active participants in the Decade. Ten NGOs received awards for projects. These projects cover a wide range of areas, such as one in Outer Mongolia to reinstitute the traditional Mongolian alphabet, the Ourgen script, which was replaced by the cyrillic alphabet during the period of heavy soviet influence, to broaden participation in cultural life a grant was made to a group in Belgium to strengthen a programme to develop tactile art, to make

such cultural expressions available to the blind. Scholarship funds for international students were awarded to a summer training programme for cultural animators in Jamaica, to support a meeting in progress now in Zaire on the African aesthetic in preparation for the festival of African Arts to be held in Morocco and for a series of case studies on the cultural factors affecting developing beginning in Indonesia and subsequently including Thailand and Sri Lanka. Most importantly, we will begin work next year developing major projects in four areas; culture, management and development; Tourism, Culture and Development; Cultural Pluralism Towards the Year 2000 and the Cultural industries, Technology and Development, for which UNESCO will seek external financial support.

Cultural Factors in Management and Development

There is evidence that the development community is beginning to accept the notion that the human being should be the object and the instrument of development and to consider qualitative, as well as quantitative indicators to assess the level of development. Over twenty years ago, the then President Julius Nyerere argued that development should not only be based on vertical economic indicators such as increase in per capita income, but such other distributive factors as the increase in consumption of basic needs and services.

The recent report of the South Commission, chaired by Mr. Nyerere, summarizes the cultural dimension of development concisely when it states,

> Culture must be a central component of development strategies in a double sense: on the one hand, the strategies must be sensistive to the cultural roots of the society, to the basic shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs; on the other, they must include as a goal the development of the culture itself, the creative expansion, deepening, and change of the society's cultural stock.

The 1990 Human Development report of UNDP defines "human development" as a process which leads to the broadening of the range of possibilities offered to everyone. It requires the achievement of three conditions: to live long and in good health, to acquire knowledge and have access to the resources necessary to enjoy a decent standard of living. It further encompasses such important notions as political, economic or social freedom as well as creativity, productivity, self respect and the guarantee of fundamental human rights.

The cultural dimension of development is slightly different. The human dimension tends to focus on the need to increase support for such key social sectors as education, health, housing and safe drinking water, an open, participatory form of governance, the cultural dimension is an overall approach to development, regardless of the sector concerned which suggests that each society has its own rationality and that the values, perspectives, behaviour and belief systems of the beneficiary groups should be taken into account in the design and

implementation of all development interventions and that they should participate in all stages of the process. The approach further calls upon planners and donor agencies to try to foresee the socio-cultural consequences of development programmes.

The goal is not to try to provide answers for how to proceed in each specific cultural context, but rather to define a methodology for identifying what socio-cultural factors might have an impact on the project and a process whereby modifications can be made to address these factors.

In view of the current linkage between protection of the environment and institutional development, it should be noted that there is a very clear linkage between culture and the environment. Popular wisdom tends to make a distinction between those societies who accommodate to nature and those that attempt to control it and suggests that the former are more attuned to the need to maintain an ecological balance. Earlier theories of climatic determinism suggested that the nature of the environment has an impact on human values and behaviour. Marvin Harris's theory of cultural materialism suggests that the way a people make their living determines their belief system and patterns of interaction.

In a recent book entitled Cultural Theory, Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky dismiss the recurring debate among social scientists about whether institutional structures cause culture, or culture causes structure and suggest that "Values and social

or culture causes structure and suggest that "Values and social relations are mutually interdependent and reinforcing: Institutions generate distinctive sets of preferences, and adherence to certain values legitimizes corresponding institutional arrangements.". They contend that there are five main ways of life (defined as a viable combination of social relations and cultural bias, that is shared values and beliefs): Individualist, Egalitarian, Hierachist, Fatalist and Hermit and that these different models tend to reflect different myths about nature that affect their treatment of it.

According to this theory, Individualist societies see nature as benign and believe that no matter what knocks we deliver, nature will tend to remain in global equilibrium. Therefore one can have a laissez-faire management policy towards it.

Egalitarian societies view nature as ephemeral and believe it to be terrifying and unforgiving and that the least jolt may lead to its complete collapse. Consequently, they believe that nature must be treated with care.

Hierarchist societies believes that nature is perverse yet tolerant and while it is forgiving of most events, it is vulnerable to an occasional disaster which can be very destructive. Therefore, nature should be regulated and protected against unusual occurences.

Fatalist societies view nature as capricious. They tend not to attempt to manage or learn about nature, but rather cope with erratic events.

Finally, the Hermit sees nature as resilient. Such individuals believe in the oneness of man and nature, the unity of opposites and the ultimate possibility of release from the cycle of suffering. It would be interesting to assess this intriguing theory through concrete case studies.

Tourism, Culture and Development

Since the joint UNESCO-World Bank study on tourism and development in the mid-1970's, Tourism : Passport to Development? tourism has become an ever more important industry, particularly in developing countries. Since the 1980's, tourism has become the most important foreign exchange earner in the Caribbean. It is estimated that air traffic in Europe will triple by 2020 and, in recognition of the importance of this sector, the European Economic Community declared 1990 the European Year for Tourism.

Tourism is a unique sector. Tourism involves sending the consumer to the country, rather than exporting the commodity out of it. The term "tourist industry" is a misnomer, for tourism depends upon a series of industries, of which the transportation, hotel, food and entertainment industries are the most obvious.

Moreover, unlike certain other industries, for which environmental protection may be considered an expensive nuisance, clean beaches, safe drinking water and smog-free air are among the most basic ingredients of successful tourist areas.

Any UNESCO projects will have two main objectives : to enhance the cultural attractions for tourists through preservation of cultural and historical sites, improvements in museums, and strengthening of the production and marketing of local handicrafts and to provide training for comprehensive planning in this sector and its impact on the natural and social environment that takes into account the concerns of both the guests and the hosts.

Cultural Pluralism Towards the Year 2000

The last quarter of the twentieth century has witnessed massive population transfers within and across territorial boundaries. The rural exodus and the increase in the number of refugees, displaced persons, migrant workers and emigrants whose cultures often differ from those of their host populations create challenges of adaptation. The quest for a better life that stimulates people to move from rural to urban areas is repeated internationally as people leave developing countries of the south to the industrialized countries in the north in search of employment. The significant increase in Mexican workers in the United States is a reflection of this world-wide phenomenon.

Historically, people have used cultural, religious, racial and ethnic differences to accord, or deny, rights or privileges to other population groups. Indeed, as stated in UNESCO's Constitution, "ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, through the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between peoples of the world through which their differences have often broken into war."

As the world moves inexorably towards the establishment of more heterogenous societies, ways should be found to ensure fundamental human rights to all groups and to encourage tolerance and respect for cultural differences in the interest of domestic tranquility and international peace and understanding. UNESCO's projects in this area would aim to create greater understanding and goodwill among the diverse peoples of the world at the national and international level. They will seek to increase the awareness of teachers and administrators about the richness of cultural diversity and to expand the knowledge base about all peoples of the work and their interactions over time.

Technology, cultural industries and development

The market for cultural products - books, records, art, films - is changing rapidly. The expansion of literacy rates, higher levels of educational attainment, increased purchasing power and satellite technology and political liberalization have greatly expanded the demand for cultural products in developing

countries, as well as the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Moreover, the significant migration of persons from developing countries to industrialized states has created a growing market in the north for cultural products, particularly films and books in Spanish, Arabic, Turkish, French and other languages. Advances in communication technology, such as desk-top publishing, electronic blending of music and computer art and architectural design have transformed the manufacture and distribution of such goods. Satellite technology and cable TV have dramatically increased the demand for television programming.

During the Decade, efforts should be made to improve the ways that the book, recording, film and other such industries in developing countries can be strengthened to service the needs of special communities, both within their respective regions and abroad.

At its extraordinary session in February 1990, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Decade adopted the principle of annual themes for the Decade, beginning this year with the focus on Culture and Democracy. In this connection, a significant international forum on Culture and Democracy under the chairmanship of President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia will be held in September. At its meeting on 17 June, the Bureau of the Committee will agree upon a final list of themes among which are Culture and the Environment in 1993, Culture and Agriculture, Culture and Development, Culture and Health and

Culture and Creativity : the Arts, Science and Technology. As 1993 has been entitled the International Year for Indigenous People, a special focus can be given to the special concern of these groups for the environment.

One of the most significant activities UNESCO will sponsor within the framework of the Decade, if approved by the Member States at the twenty-sixth session of the General Conference, will be the establishment of a World Commission to prepare a major policy report on Culture and Development. This report, as was the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, admirably chaired by the current Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, would be designed to clarify, for policy makers and the public at large, the vital impact cultural factors, by which I refer to values, perspectives and behaviour, has on development and the importance of the cultural sector as a generator of income. The Organization just completed an informal consultation on this question, on 29 April, which concluded that such a report on culture and development, jointly sponsored by UNESCO and the United Nations, with UNESCO exercising the leading role and housing the Secretariat, was desirable.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, we anticipate that activities related to the Decade will be accelerated in the next biennium. Once again, the Director-General is proposing in the draft programme and budget for 1992-1993 that US$ 1 million be set aside for Decade

activities. In addition, $500,000 is being proposed for a few major interregional projects. The Decade Secretariat will once again commit the US$ 1 million in the first year of the biennium (1992), particularly since during 1993 considerable effort will be devoted to organizing the regional meetings leading up the mid-term review in 1994.

Those intercultural projects like the Silk Roads, the Mayan World, the Baroque World, and the Iron Road will also benefit from regular programme support. A very important feature of the next biennial programme will be the joint effort by the Sector of Culture and that of the Social and Human Sciences to undertake those research and field investigations and trials necessary to devise a methodology for taking into account the cultural dimension of development. Over $340,000 for this effort for the biennium has been proposed. I would hope that the resulting UNESCO document on this theme would have an impact similar to the 1990 UNDP Human Development Report.

I am particularly pleased to announce that the Federation of Japanese Associations for UNESCO has made possible an endowment of about $1.5 million for a UNESCO prize in the Arts. The prize will be awarded to several laureates biennially, at a ceremony to commemorate the Decade on May 31, beginning in 1992.

These are some of the issues that will be addressed during the World Decade for Cultural Development, which comes at a time of exciting ferment. By taking into account the cultural

dimension of development, we do not advocate the wholesale elimination of traditionalism for modernization. By calling for the enrichment of cultural identity, we do not seek the balkanization of nation-states. Instead what is desired is greater mutual respect and international understanding, freedom for both creative and political expression for all groups in a society and recognition than scientism and materialism should be balanced by artistic creation and the nourishing of the spirit. In short to take to heart the statement made by Mahatma Gandhi when he said, "I want the cultures of all lands to circulate freely around my house, but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them".